

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY China

SUBJECT Famine in the Canton Area

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25X1. "According to an old Chinese merchant [redacted]
25X1 [redacted] a famine situation definitely exists in the general Canton area.
25X1 During [redacted] visit to Canton last winter, he witnessed about 85 bodies
locked up in the streets. They all died from hunger. Many famine refugees
from the outlying districts were roaming the streets of Canton. Some of
them even came from Hunan province looking for food in Canton.
2. The cause of famine, however, was not shortage of food product, in the opinion
of this old merchant. He attributed it rather to the failure of land reform
which should not cause any hardship itself. But it worked out contrary to
the calculation of the Red authorities in the following manner: Whatever the
rich landowners produced had been seized and confiscated. The poor tenant
farmers acquired a few pieces of land but could not borrow seeds and money
for fertilizer from the rich who had become poor themselves. The net result
was that a lot of farm land was laid waste. And the poor as well as the rich
all suffer under this new system. All are empty-handed and empty-stomached."

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